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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 003642

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA AND EUR/NCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [PL](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: POLAND/CUBA: MFA SENIOR OFFICIAL MEETS ONLY WITH
OPPOSITION DURING RECENT VISIT; PROPOSES OPPOSITION VIDEO
CONFERENCE WITH LECH WALESA.

REF: A. HAVANA 20751

1B. HAVANA 20420

Classified By: DCM KENNETH HILLAS, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) This is an action request for WHA/CCA and USINT
Havana. See paragraph 8.

12. (C) Summary: MFA Director for the Americas Henryk Szlajfer gave PolCouns a read-out on his recent visit to Cuba, where he met only with opposition figures, and was completely boycotted by the government. He said he was impressed by the "determination" of many in the opposition, but noted some divisions. Poland wants to do what it can to support democracy movements in Cuba, and will follow the German model in inviting opposition and government officials to separate events on the same day for their upcoming November 11 national day. Szlajfer asked our assistance in helping to arrange a video conference between the dissidents and former Polish President Lech Walesa. End Summary.

13. (C) Szlajfer, who spent time in jail under the Polish Communist government, said he felt like he had "traveled back in time," with the heavy-handed presence of police and the economic stagnation. Prior to his trip the Cuban MFA called the Polish Charge in Havana to warn that Szlajfer's visa had been issued "by mistake," but he decided to travel. He was met at the airport by the UK DCM (representing the EU). When the Cuban government said officials would not meet with him if he met with the opposition, he chose to meet the opposition, and so had no official meetings during his stay.

14. (C) Szlajfer met with several opposition leaders and groups, including Marta Beatriz Roque, Vladimiro Roca, Oswaldo Paya, and Elizardo Sanchez. (Note: Szlajfer said that he understood that USINT Havana had some concerns about Sanchez, perhaps because of his history in the secret police, but noted that none of the other dissidents had any problem meeting with Szlajfer with Sanchez present. End Note) He also met with the "Ladies in White" group of wives of political prisoners, and traveled to Pinar del Rio to meet with Dagoberto Valdes and the local Catholic bishop. He commented that the later group's activities were tolerated by the Castro government because of their ties to the Vatican. Szlajfer noted that he met all the opposition leaders at the now-vacant residence of the Polish Ambassador, and that on his road trip to Pinar del Rio he was followed for some time by security, but then they appeared to have dropped off.

15. (C) Szlajfer said he thought there was some "progress" among the opposition in terms of overall unity and determination, but noted some continuing divisions. He said he thought Marta Roque was the "most energetic," but that some of the others were concerned about her close ties to the emigre community in Miami, and noted what he interpreted as some "resentment" among some of the others over the role of the emigre community. He was most impressed by the "determination" of the "Ladies in White" group. He said their situation was difficult not only because of repression, but also because, he believed, "significant elements" of the population are not alienated by the regime, and in fact feel they owe something to Castro. He thought the police were more brutal than Poland had experienced under communism, and was struck by the activism of the neighborhood "revolutionary committees" in monitoring the actions of individuals.

16. (C) The opposition saw two possible scenarios for post-Castro Cuba. One is a peaceful transition, and he said he spent "hours" discussing Poland's transition with the dissidents. They were, in particular, interested in how Poland handled "reconciliation" with those who participated in the communist government, and in how Cuba might use such "reconciliation" as a way forward. Szlajfer said some of the dissidents saw the alternative as violence "along the Haiti model," with dramatic bloodshed among "competing caudillos."

17. (C) Poland's policy is to support efforts to bring democracy to Cuba, and Szlajfer said that the Polish Embassy will follow Germany's model (Ref B) for its national day on November 11, inviting the opposition and the government to

two separate events on the same day. The Polish government knows the Cuban government will not be happy. "Let them refuse" to come, said Szlajfer.

18. (C) Szlajfer said the opposition asked if Poland could help organize a real-time video conference with former President Lech Walesa, who led Poland's Solidarity movement that sparked Poland's own transition to democracy. Szlajfer said the Polish government supports the idea and asked if the U.S. could participate on both ends to make this happen, with Walesa appearing from the Embassy Warsaw DVC facility and the Cuban opposition meeting at USINT in Havana for the conference. He said the Cuban opposition wanted to work with us to make it clear Walesa was speaking from Poland in order to convey symbolically the path Poland had taken in its peaceful transition to democracy.

19. (C) Comment and Action Request: The Poles are strong supporters of pro-democracy efforts vis a vis Cuba. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, one of the Euro-Deputies refused entry in June, may well become Foreign Minister when the new government is formed next week, and reflects the attitudes of others in the incoming center-right coalition government. Embassy Warsaw would like to work with the Poles make the video conference happen. We have an in-house DVC facility which we believe would work for such a program. We stand ready to move forward and look forward to a response from USINT or WHA/CCA.

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